How to / Trackmania / User appearance / Car skins

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Introduction

You have read about **2D Car skins**, and now you want to create your own :-)

To paint a Car skin in Trackmania you have two options:

- You use the ingame Painter
- You can paint it with your favorite paint program

Ingame painter

If you go for option one, consult your Trackmania handbook on how to operate the ingame painter, we won't deal with it here ...
A real paint program will offer you much more options and tools to get what you want.

Paint the skin

With option 2, we'll use the **Prelight texture** of the environment's car as the source for our custom painted skin...
The prelight texture is a rather large graphic file (1024 or 2048 pixels in width/height), used by the game add some additional light/darkness areas to your car's appearance.

And because the prelight texture has the same layout as a "normal" car skin graphic, it's a perfect template for us to paint on...

The **Prelight textures** are located in these folders

[Game folder]\GameData\Painter\Layers\[Environment]\Prelight\Layer.dds

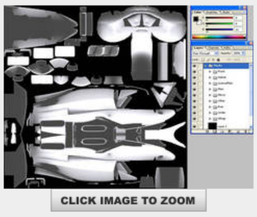
Whenever you open an original prelight texture, **save a copy** to a temporary folder and **work with the copy**, not with the original!

To make this tutorial a bit easier, we have converted the StadiumCar Prelight texture to
→ **Photoshop** (compatible) or → **Photopaint** (compatible) graphic files, which have selectable objects.
Furthermore you should know how to **read/write DDS files**.

Start with opening the .psd or .cpt file in your paint program, you will see the Prelight texture of the Car...

On the right of the screen you see a list of layers/objects, representing the different car parts...

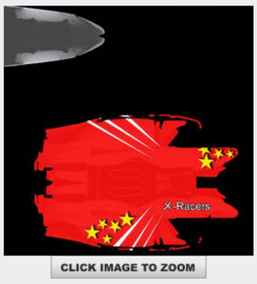
Everything is named accordingly, so I figure this will be understandable.



CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

Begin with selecting the object/part you want to edit and make all others invisible...

Now you can start to fill it with a paint color, apply brushes over it, write text onto it, manipulate it like you want...

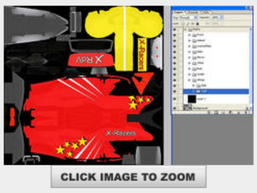


CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

You'll get the best results, if you paint every single object with some love for details.

Often it's enough to apply some simple pattern (like our **carbon pattern**) to an object to make it look good in the game.

Do this with all the objects you want to be edited.



CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

In addtition, you can create an "**Alpha channel**" (in Photoshop) or "Transparency mask" (other paint programs).
Usually, alpha/transparency information is used to determine, how transparent an object is, but within Trackmania, this alpha/transparency information is used to determine an object's **shinyness**, how much light it will reflect...

If you want an object to shine, copy it into the alpha channel/transparency mask. If you want the object to be matte, leave it outside.

The last step is to re-establish the original **pre-shading** of the objects.

Therefor, load the complete original Prelight texture and insert it as a layer/object on the top of all others.

Then set the Properties/"Blend mode" of this layer/object to "Multiply" and you car is perfectly shaded.

Flatten the graphics (=combine all layers/objects with the background).

Now you're ready to save your file.

CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

Within Photoshop, you can directly save the picture as a .DDS texture (DXT5 with mipmaps).
If your paint program doesn't support saving .DDS textures, just save your picture as a .TGA or .PNG file and use the *DDS Converter* to create a .DDS file out it, just as you have learned it in the **graphic formats** tutorial.

Now your new skin texture is ready to be put into your **custom car's zip file**.

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